

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8570

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NAIROBI 9870

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, KE

SUBJ: MEETING WITH "AFRICA GROUP" AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED TO KENYA

1. IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A CLOSER CONSULTING LIAISON WITH THE AFRICAN CHIEFS OF MISSION RESIDENT IN NAIROBI, I INVITED MY AFRICAN COLLEAGUES TO A DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA WHICH WE HELD ON THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 28. THE MEETING, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY ALL 13 OF THE AFRICAN AMBASSADORS, HIGH COMMISSIONERS OR CHARGE'S ACCREDITED TO KENYA, EXCEPT THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR, LASTED FOR ABOUT 3 HOURS. SINCE I HAD ONLY THE WEEK BEFORE ADDRESSED THE KENYA PRESS CLUB ON THE SUBJECT OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA, THE TEXT OF MY TALK SERVED AS OUR BASIC DISCUSSION PIECE, ALTHOUGH THE MEETING WAS DESIGNED TO RANGE FREELY ON THE PRESSING ISSUES IMPINGING UPON U.S.-AFRICAN RELATIONS. THERE WAS GENERAL SATISFACTION ON THE UTILITY OF OUR DISCUSSIONS AND I THINK THE MEETING WAS OF SOME DIRECT VALUE IN THAT A COUPLE OF AMBASSADORS WILL BE PART OF THEIR NATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO THE OAU MEETINGS IN KHARTOUM. SOME SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS AND POINTS OF VIEW THAT EMERGED FROM OUR DISCUSSIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

A.) ON FORMULATING U.S. POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA:

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IN ADDITION TO A GENERAL SATISFACTION THAT APPROPRIATE AND DIRECT ATTENTION WERE BEING GIVEN TO AFRICA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, THERE WAS STRONG FEELING THAT THE U.S. CAN PLAY A PARTICULARLY BENEFICIAL ROLE IN AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BECAUSE THE U.S. IS UNENCUMBERED WITH "A POLITICAL HISTORY IN AFRICA" SIMILAR TO THA OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL WESTERN

POWERS. THE ABSENCE OF A COLONIAL PAST IN AFRICA FREES THE U.S. FROM THE SUSPICIONS THAT CONTINUE TO AFFECT THE RELATIONS OF THE AFRICAN STATES AND THE OTHER WESTERN POWERS. THE U.S. SHOULD THUS MAKE USE OF ITS GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND SCOPE IN INFLUENCING WESTERN POLICY AND ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS AFRICA. IN THIS REGARD THE POINT WAS MADE BY SEVERAL DISCUSSANTS THAT SINCE U.S. INTERESTS WERE NOT IDENTICAL WITH THOSE OF THE OTHER WESTERN FORMER COLONIAL POWERS AND SINCE THE U.S. IS THE DOMINANT POWER AMONG THE WESTERN ALLIES, THE U.S. SHOULD EXERCISE A DOMINANT INFLUENCE UPON POLICY AND NOT MERELY ASSUME A PARTICIPANT ROLE IN WESTERN INITIATIVES.

B.) THE PAN AFRICAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE:

THERE SEEMED TO BE A GENERAL SKEPTICISM THAT A PAN AFRICAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE WAS PRACTICAL AT THIS TIME, EVEN IF IT WERE CONCEIVED AND ORGANIZED BY THE OAU. SUCH A FORCE ORGANIZED BY OUTSIDE POWERS WAS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WAS A UNIFORM VIEW THAT EVERY AFRICAN STATE HAD A SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO INVITE WHOMEVER IT DESIRED TO HELP IN ITS DEFENSE OF ITS NATIONAL SECURITY -- WHETHER THEY WERE FRENCHMEN OR CUBANS. THE DOUBTS ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF A PAN AFRICAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE CENTERED AROUND WHEN AND HOW IT WOULD BE DETERMINED TO USE SUCH A FORCE. IT WAS STRONGLY ARGUED THAT THERE WERE TOO MANY POTENTIAL CONFLICTUAL SITUATIONS OF AN INTRA AND INTER AFRICAN NATURE ON THE CONTINENT FOR A PEACE KEEPING FORCE TO BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ULTIMATELY MANAGEABLE AND EFFECTIVE. GIVEN THE DIVISIVENESS AND FRAGILITY OF THE OAU ITSELF, THE FEAR WAS ALSO EXPRESSED THAT SUCH A FORCE WOULD FALL PREY TO THE RIVALRIES WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION. THE BEST HOPE FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICTUAL SITUATIONS, IT WAS GENERALLY FELT, LAY IN GIVING REAL POWER TO THE OAU'S ARBITRATION MECHANISM TO MOVE MORE SWIFTLY AND AUTHORITATIVELY TO FEND OFF AND DIFFUSE EXPLOSIVE SITUATIONS.

C.) GLOBALISM AND U.S. POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA:

WHILE I WOULD SAY THAT THERE WAS TOTAL UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN POLICY OBJECTIVE TO CHECK SOVIET EXPANSIONISM IN AFRICA, AS ELSEWHERE, THERE WAS ALSO REAL CONCERN EXPRESSED THAT EAST/WEST COMPETITION THREATENED TO WRONGFULLY TURN LOCALIZED AFRICAN PROBLEMS INTO GLOBAL BLOC STRUGGLES. THE OGADEN WAR WAS VIEWED AS THE RESULT OF NAKED AGGRESSION OF ONE COUNTRY AGAINST A NEIGHBOR. THE STRUGGLES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA ARE REGARDED AS "WARS OF INDEPENDENCE." NO ONE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE CALL OF CUBAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN EITHER INSTANCE WAS FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS, BUT RATHER TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN SPECIFIC AND WHOLLY LEGITIMATE OBJECTIVES, I.E., REPEL AGRESSION AND ACHIEVE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE.

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WHILE IT WAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE POSSIBLE RESIDUAL
EFFECT OF THE USE OF RUSSO-CUBAN ASSISTANCE IN THESE
AND SIMILAR CASES CARRIED SOME IDEOLOGICAL RISKS, NO ONE
MENTIONED THAT THESE RISKS WERE TOO HIGH. THE SENSE I GOT WAS
THAT OF A FAIRLY UNIFORM AND STRONG CONVICTION THAT THE PROBLEMS
IN AFRICA ARE GOING TO BE OF A SPECIFIC AND LOCALIZED NATURE,
THAT THEY WILL BE EXPLOITED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EAST-WEST
COMPETITION BUT THE THREAT OF SUCH EXPLOITATION CAN'T BE THE
PRINCIPAL AND PRIORITY ISSUE.

D.) THE OAU AND KHARTOUM SUMMIT:

MY COLLEAGUES WERE HESITANT ABOUT OFFERING THEIR VIEWS ON HOW
THE DEBATE MIGHT GO ON THE SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS AT THE
KHARTOUM MEETINGS OF MINISTERS AND HEADS OF STATE. THEY WERE
SURPRISINGLY NOT DEFENSIVE OR OVERLY SENSITIVE TO MY CRITICISM
THAT THE OAU HAS THUS FAR PROVED TO BE STRUCTURALLY AND
FUNCTIONALLY INEFFECTIVE IN DEALING WITH PEACE KEEPING ISSUES.
IN FACT THERE WAS BROAD AND CANDID ADMISSION OF THE OAU'S
BASIC WEAKNESS IN THE AREA, WITH SOMETHING OF A HOPEFUL WISH
THAT THE SUMMIT WILL DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM SINCE THE OAU,
INSTRUMENTALLY AT LEAST, OFFERS THE BET CHANCE FOR CONTAINING
AND MANAGING CONFLICT IN AFRICA AND HEADING OFF OUTSIDE
INTERVENTION.

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E.) U.S. AID TO AFRICA:

THERE IS GROWING EXPECTATION OVER THE USG ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO AFRICA OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. I WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR FROM THE DISCUSSANTS A RATHER VOLUBLE ECHO OF A THEME THAT EMERGED IN OUR OWN RECENT CHIEFS OF MISSION SEMINAR ON ECONOMIC POLICY; NAMELY, THAT SERIOUS RECONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO "INFRA-STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT" IN OUR AID PROGRAMMING. THERE SEEMS TO BE A GROWING FEELING THAT THE NEXT STIMULUS TO THE DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT IN AFRICA SHOULD COME FROM AN EXPANSION OF INTER AFRICAN TRADE AND COMMERCE WHICH IS SERIOUSLY BLOCKED FOR LACK OF ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATIONAL INFRA-STRUCTURE. HERE AGAIN MY CRITICISM OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA AS HAVING FAILED TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC PLANNING THAT WOULD PROVE HELPFUL TO DONOR AGENCIES AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS WAS RECEIVED AS JUSTIFIABLE. FROM OUR DISCUSSION I EXPECT THAT THE THEME OF INFRA-STRUCTURE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY MORE INSISTENT.

2. WHAT I HAVE TRIED TO CITE ARE MERELY THE DOMINANT IMPRESSIONS I TOOK FROM OUR DISCUSSIONS. THERE WERE NO REAL SURPRISES OR PARTICULARLY FRESH IDEAS ABOUT APPROACHES TO THE OLD AND VEXING PROBLEMS WE DISCUSSED. THE IMPORTANT RESULT WAS THAT I THINK I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH A BASIS FOR A SINCERE AND FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON OUR POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA WITH MY AFRICAN COLLEAGUES. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE AFRICANS WILL TAKE US AT OUR WORD; NAMELY, THAT WE WANT TO CONSULT WITH THEM AND WE ARE PREPARED TO LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT RELATIONS TO PROBLEMS THAT PRIMARILY AFFECT THEM. HAVING SAID THIS, I HASTEN TO ADD THAT THE FACILE NOTION OF AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS IS NOT GOING TO EASILY PRODUCE THE ANSWERS WE NEED TO THE INTRACACIES OF INTER AFRICAN POLITICS.

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ONE VIEWPOINT I THINK I DID GET FROM MY DISCUSSION WITH THE AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IS THAT THEY FEEL THEY UNDERSTAND A LITTLE BETTER THAN WE DO THE INTERESTS OF OUR WESTERN ALLIES IN AFRICA. THEY SEEM FURTHER TO EXPECT THAT WHILE OUR POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA WILL REFLECT A CONCERT OF PURPOSE WITH OUR ALLIES, OUR ACTIONS SHOULD EQUALLY REFLECT THE INDEPENDENCE AND DOMINANCE OF THE MAJOR WESTERN POWER.

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